



2006 Census: You can choose to be part of the Census 2006 Time Capsule

YOU CAN CHOOSE TO BE PART OF THE CENSUS 2006 TIME CAPSULE

How Australia might look in 99 years time is a matter for speculation. But the people of 2105 will certainly have an idea about how we lived in 2006.

The lives of leaders and other newsworthy figures of our day will be recorded, but they are not the only ones who have a chance to be a part of history.

In the Census, to be held on 8 August this year by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, all respondents have the option of having their Census information saved for posterity. This option is called the Census Time Capsule. If people answer yes to this option the personal information on their Census form will be microfilmed and kept securely for 99 years by the National Archives of Australia.

In August 2105 this information will be publicly released. It will be available to historians and genealogists for study. It will also be available to your own descendants. It will provide an valuable insight into how we lived at the beginning of the 21st Century.

This is the second Census in which Australians have had the option of saving their Census information in this way. The first was in 2001. In 2001, just over 50 per cent of people chose to have their information preserved. Before that an individual's Census information was destroyed after being processed into statistics.

In contrast Britain has long preserved personal Census information. Britain has recently put its Census records online. Census records dating back to 1841 can be accessed.

The 1841 British Census showed that Queen Victoria was at home in Buckingham Palace on Census night, 6 June 1841. Novelist Charles Dickens, 29 years old at the time, was also at home in London's Devonshire Terrace.

Of course there are millions of people who never entered the limelight, but who are vitally important to their descendants. The people of today's Britain can look back on these Census records and find them.

That opportunity will also be available in 2105 to the descendants of those Australians who chose to have their Census information preserved in 2006.

Census information will only be retained for people who select yes to the option. Each individual in a household will have the choice of whether they want to have their information retained. After the information of those who chose yes is copied on to microfilm their Census forms will be destroyed. All Census forms are destroyed at the end of processing, and the ABS does not keep any copies of these forms.

The first Australian Census Time Capsule - the 2001 Time Capsule project - came into being after the Federal Government accepted the recommendation from the Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs report, **Saving Our Census and Preserving Our History**, which called for the retention of personally-identified Census information.

This report stated that saving this data "for future research, with appropriate safeguards, will make a valuable contribution to preserving Australia's history for future generations".

The 2001 Census also coincided with the Centenary of Federation, which helped focus minds on historical issues. The project was officially endorsed by the National Council for the Centenary of Federation and the Census Information Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 was passed by Federal Parliament in early March 2000 to make the necessary changes for the 2001 Census.

Since then it has been decided that the Time Capsule option will be made a permanent feature of the Census.

Parliament has passed the Census Information Legislation Amendment Bill 2005, to make the necessary changes to the 2006 Census and all future Censuses. The Act, like its predecessor, guarantees the privacy of the information, including from courts and tribunals.

Question 60 on the household 2006 Census form (question 54 on the personal Census form) is where people can choose to become part of the Time Capsule project.

The project is called the "Census Time Capsule" because research conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated that the general public understood the concept of a time capsule to be information placed in an inaccessible place, and subsequently released at a predetermined time in the future.

The Census Time Capsule is not a "capsule" as such but secure storage areas within the purpose built repositories of the National Archives. These special areas are accessible only to authorised National Archives staff.

Information held in the 2001 Time Capsule will be publicly available from 7 August, 2100 and information in the 2006 Time Capsule will be publicly available from 8 August, 2105.

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